

Critical Paper #1

PHILOSOPHY 1308

Due: THURSDAY FEB 11

Summary

In this paper you will present an author's argument and critically evaluate it. Roughly half of your paper should be dedicated to a careful summary of the author's argument in your own words and the other half to your critique of the argument. Essentially you're defending an answer to this question: Is the author's argument successful?

Formatting

The paper must be between 1200-1500 words. As a rough guide: 300 words is approximately 1 page double-spaced when using size 12 font, with a font like Times New Roman and 1 inch margins. Please do *not* list your name anywhere on the paper. **At the beginning of the paper, list only your Baylor ID number and the word count.** The paper should be emailed to lindsayrettler@gmail.com as a Word document or a pdf by the beginning of class (3:30 pm) on Thursday February 11.

Paper Topics

Choose one of the following prompts. If you prefer to write on something else, you need to approve the topic with me before turning in the paper.

- Socrates argues in response to Agathon that love is not beautiful. Explain the argument in your own words, then critically evaluate the argument. Is Socrates' argument successful? If you think it is, then you must defend it from at least one possible objection. If you think it is not, then explain how it fails.
- Socrates and Alcibiades each represent and advocate two contrasting ways of love or ways to the good. Explain each of these ways, then critically evaluate them, paying special attention to the question of whether these ways are in conflict. For your thesis, you may choose to argue that one path is superior to the other, that neither are the correct way to approach love, or that they are both equally valuable. But in any case, you must articulate why they are in conflict or else explain why they are compatible.
- Aristotle distinguishes between three types of friendship. Explain each of the types and then critically evaluate his method of categorizing friendships. Are his categories exhaustive? Do they represent the best way to distinguish friendships? Why or why not? Make sure to use specific examples.
- C.S. Lewis argues that each type of love can become corrupted in specific ways. Pick one of the types of love (affection, friendship, eros, *or* charity) and explain how he thinks that love can be corrupted. Then critically evaluate his view. Make sure to clearly explain the type of love in question, and also, use specific examples.

Paper Structure

Here is a good way to structure your paper:

1. Introduction paragraph

Identify the author and argument that you will be evaluating, give a very brief statement of the author's argument and conclusion, then state your thesis. The thesis is a concise statement of your particular evaluation of the argument.

Here's a sample intro paragraph:

Carrie Jenkins argues that an act counts as flirting if and only if two conditions are met. First, the flirter must act with the intention to bring up the idea of romance or sex between the flirter and flirtee and secondly, the flirter must believe that the flirtee can respond in some way. She argues that this analysis best explains several paradigm cases of flirting and that it successfully rules out cases of accidental flirting. I will argue that Jenkins' analysis is wrong, because there are some cases in which the flirter does not actually intend to bring up the idea of romance or sex, and yet the flirter still counts as flirting. Therefore, having this sort of intention is not a necessary condition on flirting.

2. Exposition

In roughly 3-4 paragraphs, explain the view and argument that you are evaluating. Start by clearly stating the author's conclusion. Then provide a summary of the premises in support of that conclusion and the author's reasons for holding the premises. Of course you need to be selective, because you don't have space to talk about everything the author says. Pick out what is relevant to your critique. Summarize the author's arguments in such a way, that when you give your critique in the following sections, it is clear what your target is.

3. Critique

In roughly 3-4 paragraphs, make a case for why you do or do not agree with how the author has argued for his/her conclusion. If you are arguing that the author's argument is unsuccessful, then you must argue either that one or more of the premises is false, or that even if the premises are true, they do not support the author's conclusion. If you are arguing that the author's argument *is* successful, then you must defend it from at least two possible objections. Explain *why* the argument is successful.

Note: Do *not* simply state whatever reasons you think are for/against the position in question independent of what the author says. Instead you must specifically interact with the arguments given by the author you choose.

4. Conclusion paragraph

Briefly summarize what you've claimed in your evaluation. But don't simply repeat the introduction; come up with a new succinct way to capture what you've done in the paper.

Grading

I will be grading your paper with respect to the following:

1. *Organization and structure*: There is a clear introduction, body, and conclusion. Each paragraph is centered around one central thought, and each successive paragraph suitably related to the preceding paragraph. Do not try to cover too many different things in one paragraph. Paragraphs should be between 3-6 sentences long.
2. *Clear and original thesis*: Your position in response to the author's argument is clearly stated in your introduction and is your own original contribution.
3. *Explanation of the author's arguments*: Your summary of the author's arguments is clear and correctly interprets the author in question.
4. *Good arguments for your position*: Your premises are well-defended and support your conclusion—i.e. your thesis statement.
5. *Clarity of expression*: A readable paper has well-formed sentences and few grammatical errors.